



STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

P.O. BOX 2360
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96804

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

February 5, 2019

Via Email: rpeters@hanahauoli.org

Robert Peters, Ed.D.
Chair, Early Learning Board
2707 South King Street
Honolulu, Hawaii 96826

Dear Dr. Peters,

We are reaching out with some serious concerns we have following the legislative hearings on House Bill 921 and Senate Bill 967 regarding the future of pre-kindergarten (PreK) programming for Hawaii's children.

In the case of HB 921, although this bill is being described as a simple "housekeeping" measure, in reality, it is proposing significant and fundamental changes to the governance structure of Hawaii's public school system, over which the Board of Education has constitutional oversight.

The extensive list of administrative, leadership and teacher-quality work being led by the Hawaii State Department of Education (HIDOE), our Complex Area Superintendents, principals and teachers (with regard to facilities, proper play spaces, safety assessments, professional development, budgeting, etc.) continues to be dismissed as insignificant by the Executive Office of Early Learning (EOEL) — to the point that HIDOE was left off a list of acknowledgements as meaningful contributors to the federal Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five (PDG B-5) initiative.

All partners at the table are being treated as "capable" leaders when it comes to PreK programming, while HIDOE is being represented as incapable of understanding and managing its own PreK program. All other providers, including charters most recently, are empowered decision-makers and HIDOE is being treated as disempowered. No other entity, charter or private, is being asked to prove their capability to govern a PreK program.

We are also seriously concerned by the continued negative comments being made in public about our school principals and teachers who are serving our neediest students with early learning opportunities. Our HIDOE call to action to more aggressively expand PreK access was prompted by these same individuals in the field, who see first-hand the demand for more public PreK in our communities. Yet they are criticized for supposedly lacking subject-matter expertise in this area.

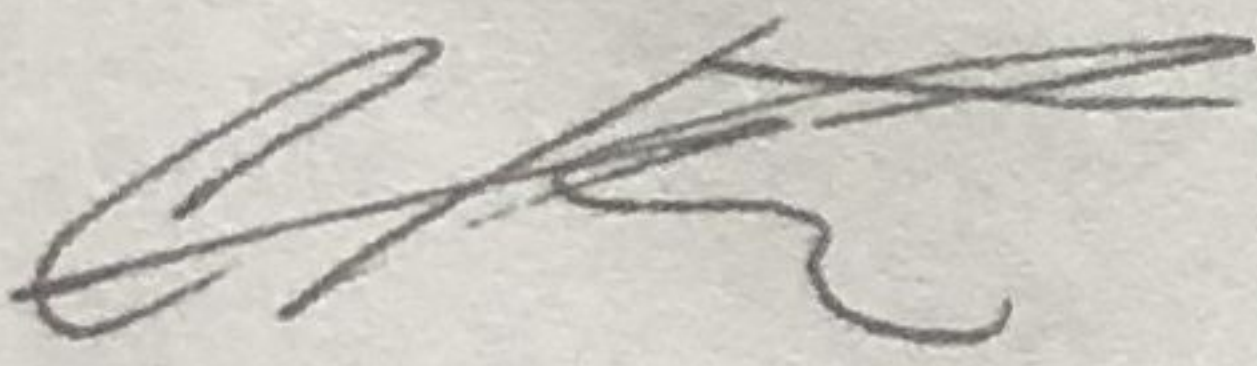
AN AFFIRMATIVE ACTION AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

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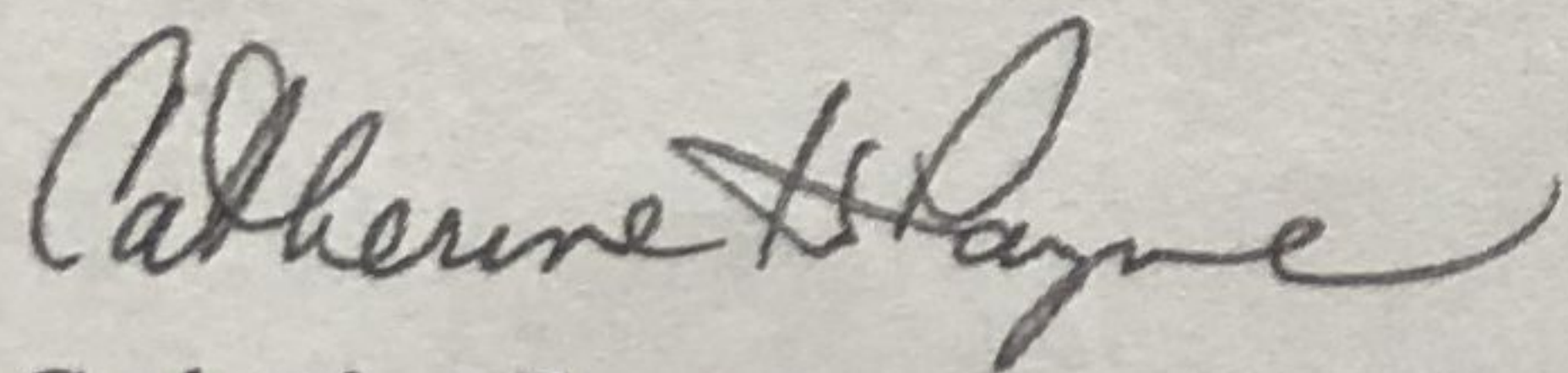
As you know, the Early Learning Board (ELB) is comprised of a wide-range of education stakeholders, with HIDOE responsible for educating the largest population in our state. However, it often appears that the Department's interests are not being represented or supported by this influential board. Your testimony as ELB Chair before the House Lower and Higher Education Committee did not reflect the opposing view of one of your members.

As chairman of the ELB, we strongly encourage you to initiate a conversation among board members to understand what is at stake with these proposals and how we can move forward in a way that truly serves our students and communities and does not disempower HIDOE's school and complex leaders.

Sincerely,



Dr. Christina M. Kishimoto
Superintendent



Catherine Payne
Chairperson, Board of Education

CMK/CP:lc

c: Deputy Superintendent
Complex Area Superintendents